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CANAL WORKERS MOVED TO NEW OIL BASIN

Paris in French to the Danubian and Balkan Countries, Jan 8, 1954, 2000 GMT

It is confirmed that the big Communist enterprises exalted by Stalin, which were to have transformed nature, have been abandoned. Mr. Khrushchev, at a conference of industry heads, announced the provisional cessation of work on the big projects of the Volga and Central Asian plains.

This decision, never publicly divulged, is motivated by the new economic orientation

toward the development of consumer goods production in the USSR. The Volga-Ural canal, which was to have joined Stalingrad to the industrial centers around Uralsk, and which would have irrigated the Caspian plain, has been abandoned. Another gigantic project has also been suspended; this was the joining of the Aral Sea to the Caspian by a 1200-kilometer canal, which would have made possible the irrigation of an immense desert territory.

But Mr. Khrushchev announced at the conference of Soviet industry heads that the 80,000 workmen released by the stoppage of work on the Caspian projects were to be transferred to the new oil basin discovered in the extreme north of European Russia. This is in the Kola Peninsula and the Murmansk area, where drilling has already produced un hoped-for results. Access to these territories is banned without special permit, but the exploitation of the new basin has not been entrusted to the MVD, as have other northern enterprises, but to the competent civil authorities instead.

A considerable amount of specialized equipment, many specialists, and abundant manpower are beginning to flow into the northern oil fields. Official figures on Soviet oil production are believed to have been falsified so as to hide the richness of the new basin. Russian oil exports for 1953 amounted to 5 million tons, one million of which was sold to non-Communist countries. Russian oil exports for 1954 are expected to be double this, with particular stress on exports to the West European countries.